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STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE

Region Four Office -- 16018 Mill Creek Boulevard, Mill Creek, WA 98012 -- (206) 775-1311

CONTROLLING NUISANCE MOUNTAIN BEAVERS

The Mountain Beaver is a unique rodent native only to the Pacific Northwest. Distantly related to the "true" beaver, Mountain Beavers more closely resemble tailless Muskrats. Weighing only 1-1/2 to 4 pounds, they have dark brown fur, tiny eyes, small rounded ears, and long front claws for digging.

The Mountain Beaver, or Aplodontia, excavates an extensive burrow system with entrances about six inches in diameter. They are nocturnal and venture out at night to harvest their favorite foods. Mountain Beavers are strictly vegetarian, preferring shoots of native Sword and Bracken Ferns, Vine Maple, Salal, and Huckleberry. Any ornamental, however, can be added to their diet, any many a gardener has been shocked by the sight of a prize Rhododendron neatly pruned down to the ground. Some people, in fact, have given Mountain Beavers the nickname of "Rhody-rooters."

Although they are not naturally gregarious, a moist brushy slope can be home to several Mountain Beavers if food supplies are plentiful. Their tunneling actually lessens erosion on wet hillsides by diverting surface runoff.

If a Mountain Beaver becomes a nuisance, several methods may be used to discourage it from your yard:

1. Lighted highway flares can be placed into burrow entrances, preferably at the bottom of the slope so that the smoke and fumes will travel up the burrow system. Other burrow entrances can be detected by the escaping smoke. These should be covered by a sheet of plastic or wood and then covered with dirt. This will make the burrow undesirable for future use and often drives the Mountain Beavers permanently from your yard. Be cautious where you place the flares -- do not put flares near dry forest litter, under old logs, or near any other combustibles.
2. Mothballs or naphthalene flakes can be placed in burrows and around shrubs you want to protect.
3. Fencing or barriers can be a very effective method of keeping out Mountain Beavers, as they travel above ground from their burrows to feed. Wire fencing should have a two-inch x two-inch mesh or smaller and be at least two-feet in height. The fencing should be fastened securely to the ground or even buried below ground level. Railroad ties can also be stacked on a slope, two to three feet high.
4. If all else fails, you may have to remove problem animals. Cage-type traps are easy to use. They should be placed in front of the burrow and baited with an apple placed behind the trip plate. Healthy

animals can be relocated in suitable habitat away from residential areas or commercial timberland. The traps must be checked morning and evening because Mountain Beavers are susceptible to hypothermia and can die in the trap. To reduce the chances of this you can cover the trap with a board or piece of plastic.

Other types of control include small foot-hold traps (#1 or 1-1/2) or small body gripping traps. Both types should be placed well inside the burrow. Injured animals should be immediately euthanized. Many local hardware and feed stores carry traps.

5. You may contact a private exterminator licensed by the Department of Game to remove wildlife. A list of these licensed exterminators is available from the Mill Creek Office at 775-1311. Varying fees may be charged.

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